

CAMBRIDGE  SCHOOL

Shakespeare

King Richard III

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2000

Fourth printing 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Monotype Ehrhardt 11/13pt. *System* QuarkXPress®.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data applied for

ISBN 0 521 648459

Prepared for publication by Stenton Associates

Designed by Richard Morris, Stonesfield Design

Picture research by Callie Kendall

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King Richard III

ACT I SCENE I Outside the Tower of London

Enter RICHARD DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

RICHARD Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York,
And all the clouds that loured upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths, 5
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front,
And now, instead of mounting barbèd steeds 10
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I that am not shaped for sportive tricks
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass, 15
I that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph,
I that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time 20
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them,
Why, I in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time, 25
Unless to see my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity.

Richard determines he will be evil. He tells the audience that he has arranged for King Edward to find his brother Clarence a threat and imprison him in the Tower. He jokes at Clarence's plight.

1 Richard as villain and actor

In line 30, 'I am determinèd to prove a villain', Richard declares his intention to be evil. Many people think that Shakespeare's portrayal of villainy resembles the character of Vice in medieval morality plays. (see page 246). Vice was a villainous servant of the devil who trapped people into sin by charm, wit and double-dealing. Like Richard, Vice often confided with the audience, encouraging them to delight in his cleverness.

Richard often refers to plays and acting techniques, relishing his skills as an actor throughout the play. For example, 'inductions' (line 32) were the dramatic prologues to plays. In your presentation of the soliloquy, use appropriate gestures and expressions to show how Richard delights in his own cleverness in using such imagery as he invites the audience to share in his plots.

2 Irony

Almost all of what Richard says to Clarence is ironic; he does not want him to have a 'good' day and already knows the answers to the questions he asks. Even his joke about christening is ironic in view of what happens later in the play. Christening uses water as a symbol of re-birth, but Clarence will shortly be drowned in a cask of wine. As you read on, watch for the many other examples of irony. You can find help on page 245.

entertain spend, enjoy
inductions preparations
mewed up imprisoned like a hawk
Dive descend
Tend'ring caring for
conduct guard

belike maybe
cross-row alphabet
issue offspring, children
toys fancies
commit imprison

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 I am determinèd to prove a villain 30
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
 Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams
 To set my brother Clarence and the king
 In deadly hate the one against the other. 35
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
 About a prophecy which says that 'G'
 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be. 40
 Dive, thoughts, down to my soul, here Clarence comes.

Enter CLARENCE guarded by BRAKENBURY

Brother, good day. What means this armèd guard
 That waits upon your grace?

CLARENCE His majesty,
 Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
 This conduct to convey me to the Tower. 45

RICHARD Upon what cause?

CLARENCE Because my name is George.

RICHARD Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
 He should for that commit your godfathers.
 Oh, belike his majesty hath some intent
 That you should be new christened in the Tower. 50
 But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

CLARENCE Yea, Richard, when I know, but I protest
 As yet I do not. But as I can learn,
 He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
 And from the cross-row plucks the letter 'G', 55
 And says a wizard told him that by 'G'
 His issue disinherited should be.
 And for my name of George begins with 'G',
 It follows in his thought that I am he.
 These, as I learn, and suchlike toys as these 60
 Hath moved his highness to commit me now.

Richard claims that Queen Elizabeth has caused King Edward to imprison Clarence, and that she and Jane Shore have become powers behind the throne. Brakenbury's unease is dismissed with innuendo and sexual puns.

1 'Men are ruled by women' (line 62)

In line 64, Richard mockingly refers to Queen Elizabeth as 'My lady Grey' because before her marriage to King Edward in 1464 she was the widow of Sir Thomas Grey. Elizabeth used her position as queen to gain power and influence for her large family, the Woodvilles, and in so doing aroused much jealousy.

Jane Shore's name occurs frequently throughout the play, though she never appears. She is the mistress of both King Edward and Lord Hastings and was believed to be a witch. Clarence hints that Hastings was responsible for keeping her out of prison.

Richard III has often traditionally been regarded as a 'male' play, yet Richard frequently refers to both women as a source of trouble, as if they possessed real power. As you work through the play, try to identify the extent of women's power and influence.

2 Making Brakenbury feel inferior? (in pairs)

Brakenbury greets Richard and Clarence as 'your graces' (line 84) because they are royal dukes, but Richard calls him 'man' (line 90) and makes jokes at Brakenbury's expense by punning on 'nought' and 'naught' meaning 'nothing' and 'to have sex'. Does Richard deliberately use his position to make Brakenbury feel inferior? Take parts as Richard and Brakenbury and act out lines 84–104 showing how Richard might emphasise his social superiority through tone, gesture and actions.

kindred family
night-walking heralds
secret messengers
suppliant beggar of favours
her deity King Edward
(or Jane Shore's evil spirits)

livery uniform
dubbed created
straitly given in charge
strictly ordered
conference conversation
Well struck advanced

RICHARD Why, this it is when men are ruled by women.
 'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower.
 My lady Grey, his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
 That tempts him to this harsh extremity. 65
 Was it not she and that good man of worship,
 Anthony Woodville, her brother there,
 That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
 From whence this present day he is delivered?
 We are not safe, Clarence, we are not safe. 70

CLARENCE By heaven, I think there is no man secure
 But the queen's kindred, and night-walking heralds
 That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore.
 Heard you not what an humble suppliant
 Lord Hastings was for her delivery? 75

RICHARD Humbly complaining to her deity
 Got my lord Chamberlain his liberty.
 I'll tell you what, I think it is our way,
 If we will keep in favour with the king,
 To be her men and wear her livery. 80
 The jealous, o'er-worn widow and herself,
 Since that our brother dubbed them gentlewomen,
 Are mighty gossips in our monarchy.

BRAKENBURY I beseech your graces both to pardon me;
 His majesty hath straitly given in charge 85
 That no man shall have private conference,
 Of what degree soever, with your brother.

RICHARD Even so. And please your worship, Brakenbury,
 You may partake of any thing we say.
 We speak no treason, man. We say the king 90
 Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
 Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous.
 We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
 A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue,
 And that the queen's kindred are made gentlefolks. 95
 How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY With this, my lord, myself have nought to do.

RICHARD Naught to do with Mistress Shore? I tell thee, fellow,
 He that doth naught with her (excepting one)
 Were best to do it secretly alone. 100

Richard promises to do any service he can to ensure Clarence's release. Alone on stage, Richard reveals that he really seeks Clarence's death. Hastings swears vengeance on those who caused his imprisonment.

1 Saying one thing but meaning another (in pairs)

A major feature of Richard's language is that his words frequently have double meanings. Listeners hear one thing but he means something else. Most of what he says to Clarence has meanings which Clarence does not perceive. For example, when Richard says 'Brother, farewell' Clarence probably hears a friendly voice, but Richard may mean 'Goodbye for ever because you'll soon be dead'.

As one person slowly speaks lines 107–16, pausing frequently, the other person says in each pause what Richard probably means.

2 'The new-delivered Hastings' (in pairs)

Lord Hastings is a faithful supporter of the house of York but much opposed to Queen Elizabeth and the rest of the Woodvilles. Hastings' influence weakened during the illness of his patron King Edward and that loss of power may have led to his imprisonment. As he was the lover of Jane Shore, however, she may have been responsible for Hastings' early release.

Speak lines 123–45 to form a first impression of what Hastings is like and how Richard relates to him.

3 Birds of prey

Throughout the play the imagery of birds and animals is often used to describe Richard. But here 'kites and buzzards' (line 134) refers to the Woodville clan and is ironical because Hastings fails to see that in addressing Richard he is speaking to a much more dangerous bird of prey. When Hastings refers to 'the eagles' (line 133) is it more likely he is referring to himself or Clarence?

withal also

Forbear stop

abjects despised outcasts

(Richard's joking pun on 'subjects')

widow Queen Elizabeth

(Richard again mocks her)

enfranchise free

(from prison or from life)

perforce without choice

brookd endured

to give them thanks

to be revenged on them

mewd imprisoned

BRAKENBURY What one, my lord?

RICHARD Her husband, knave. Wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY I do beseech your grace to pardon me, and withal
Forbear your conference with the noble duke.

CLARENCE We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey. 105

RICHARD We are the queen's abjects and must obey.
Brother, farewell. I will unto the king,
And whatsoe'er you will employ me in,
Were it to call King Edward's widow 'sister',
I will perform it to enfranchise you. 110
Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
Touches me deeper than you can imagine.

CLARENCE I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD Well, your imprisonment shall not be long.
I will deliver you or else lie for you. 115
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt Clarence, Brakenbury, and guards

RICHARD Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.
Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven, 120
If heaven will take the present at our hands.
But who comes here? The new-delivered Hastings?

Enter LORD HASTINGS

HASTINGS Good time of day unto my gracious lord.

RICHARD As much unto my good lord Chamberlain.
Well are you welcome to this open air. 125
How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?

HASTINGS With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must.
But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks
That were the cause of my imprisonment.

RICHARD No doubt, no doubt, and so shall Clarence too, 130
For they that were your enemies are his
And have prevailed as much on him as you.

HASTINGS More pity that the eagles should be mewed
While kites and buzzards play at liberty.

RICHARD What news abroad? 135

Hastings says Edward is near to death. Richard blames the king's lifestyle. Alone on stage, Richard hopes that Edward will not die until Clarence has been executed. He reveals his plan to marry Anne.

1 What is King Edward like?

On every page so far, there have been clues to King Edward's character. 'An evil diet long' (line 140) suggests that for a long time Edward has lived wildly. Check what Richard, Clarence and Hastings have said about Edward in Scene 1. Jot down six to ten words which sum up your impression of the king. Look back later to see if your forecast is accurate.

2 Shakespeare alters history

Shakespeare was a playwright, not an historian, so throughout *Richard III* he alters history to suit his dramatic purposes. For example, in lines 154–5, Richard plans to marry Anne, daughter of the Earl of Warwick and wife of Prince Edward, both of whom he claims to have killed. But in (historical) fact, Anne was not married to Edward (but engaged), and Richard did not kill Warwick. You will find more examples of how Shakespeare alters history as you read on (see particularly page 246).

3 Bring out the humour (in pairs)

Lines 146–63 are full of revelations of Richard's wickedness. Often actors play the lines with a great deal of humour. In line 153, 'bustle' often gains a laugh as it catches the obvious roguery of Richard's character.

Take turns to speak the lines with actions that might be used to provoke laughter.

by Saint John

Richard swears an oath
packed with post-horse
sent as quickly as possible
steeled strengthened

secret close intent hidden purpose
(What project do you think Richard has in mind?)

I run before my horse to market I am getting too far ahead of myself

HASTINGS No news so bad abroad as this at home:

The king is sickly, weak, and melancholy,
And his physicians fear him mightily.

RICHARD Now by Saint John, that news is bad indeed.

Oh, he hath kept an evil diet long

140

And over-much consumed his royal person.

'Tis very grievous to be thought upon.

Where is he, in his bed?

HASTINGS He is.

RICHARD Go you before, and I will follow you.

145

Exit Hastings

He cannot live, I hope, and must not die

Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven.

I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence

With lies well steeled with weighty arguments,

150

And if I fail not in my deep intent,

Clarence hath not another day to live:

Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy

And leave the world for me to bustle in!

For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.

What though I killed her husband and her father?

155

The readiest way to make the wench amends

Is to become her husband and her father,

The which will I, not all so much for love

As for another secret close intent

By marrying her which I must reach unto.

160

But yet I run before my horse to market.

Clarence still breathes, Edward still lives and reigns;

When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

Exit

*Lady Anne mourns over the corpse of King Henry VI.
She curses Richard for killing Henry and her husband,
Prince Edward, Henry's son.*

1 Anne's grief and anger (in pairs)

The death of the Lancastrian King Henry VI has made possible 'the glorious summer' (Act 1 Scene 1, line 2) of the house of York. Henry VI was Anne's intended father-in-law who was killed by Richard after the decisive Battle of Tewkesbury. Anne now accompanies the body to its burial. She uses the language of mourning (solemn, ritualistic and formal) reinforcing her grief through the repetition of phrases in lines 14–16, 21 and 26. Anne also reveals her deep anger against Richard as she repeats the same word but with different meanings. For example, 'blood' can mean: family (line 7); gore, rage or Yorkists (line 16). One person slowly speaks lines 1–30; the other person echoes all the words of grief and anger.

2 'Shrouded in a hearse'

Henry's corpse is on stage throughout Scene 2. The body is royal, has to be transported, and is on view for some time as Anne grieves and weeps over it. Imagine you are the stage designer and create your solution to how the corpse could be presented on stage.

3 Justifiable curses? (in small groups)

In lines 14–28, Anne curses not only Richard but also his unborn children and any future wife. Do you think Anne's pleas for such punishment are fair? Take sides and argue that her curses are justifiable or that they are morally wrong. As you work through the play you will discover the ironic consequences of Anne's curses.

Halberds soldiers
hearse bier or coffin
obsequiously as a mourner
blood family
invoke pray to
windows wounds

More direful hap betide
a more dreadful fate fall upon
abortive monster-like
Prodigious abnormal
thee (line 28) King Henry VI
interrèd buried

ACT I SCENE 2
Near the Tower of London

The corpse of KING HENRY VI is carried in accompanied by LADY ANNE, HALBERDS, TRESSEL, BERKELEY and other gentlemen

ANNE Set down, set down your honourable load,
If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,
Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
Th'untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
Poor key-cold figure of a holy king, 5
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster,
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood,
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughtered son, 10
Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds.
Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life,
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
Oh, cursèd be the hand that made these holes,
Cursèd the heart that had the heart to do it, 15
Cursèd the blood that let this blood from hence.
More direful hap betide that hated wretch
That makes us wretched by the death of thee
Than I can wish to wolves, to spiders, toads,
Or any creeping venomèd thing that lives. 20
If ever he have child, abortive be it,
Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
Whose ugly and unnatural aspèct
May fright the hopeful mother at the view,
And that be heir to his unhappiness. 25
If ever he have wife, let her be made
More miserable by the death of him
Than I am made by my young lord and thee.
Come now towards Chertsey with your holy load,
Taken from Paul's to be interrèd there. 30
And still as you are weary of this weight,
Rest you while I lament King Henry's corpse.

Richard orders the guards to set down the coffin. He threatens violence if disobeyed. Anne accuses Richard of being a devil. Henry's wounds open and begin to bleed. Anne calls for Richard's death.

1 Power-play (in groups of any size)

Richard's entrance changes the mood of the scene. Use some of the following questions to help you experiment with ways of staging lines 33–45 to bring out the struggle for power between Richard and the others.

- How many people accompany Anne?
- How many of the procession are armed?
- What actions might Richard make as he commands them to 'Stay' (line 33)?
- How does the procession react to Richard's words?
- How does Anne react both to Richard and to what her followers do?

2 The wooing scene (in pairs)

Lines 46–228 are often called the wooing scene because in them Richard tries to persuade Anne to become his wife. Take parts as Richard and Anne, and speak the lines to gain a first impression of the episode. Afterwards, work on the activity below and on the following pages.

Holinshed (see page 2) writes that Henry's corpse was seen to bleed both at St Paul's and Blackfriars. Shakespeare adds to this the popular superstition that a murdered body bleeds again in the presence of the murderer (lines 55–6). What does Anne do at these lines, and how does Richard react?

spurn stamp

Avaunt be gone

(used to banish supernatural beings)

curst spiteful

exclaims outcries

heinous evil

exhales draws out

deluge flood

quick alive

charity christian belief

Enter RICHARD DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

RICHARD Stay, you that bear the corpse, and set it down.

ANNE What black magician conjures up this fiend

To stop devoted charitable deeds?

35

RICHARD Villains, set down the corpse, or by Saint Paul,

I'll make a corpse of him that disobeys.

GENTLEMAN My lord, stand back and let the coffin pass.

RICHARD Unmannered dog, stand thou when I command.

Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,

40

Or by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot

And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

ANNE What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid?

Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal,

And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.

45

Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell.

Thou hadst but power over his mortal body;

His soul thou canst not have. Therefore be gone.

RICHARD Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

ANNE Foul devil, for God's sake hence, and trouble us not,

50

For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,

Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclaims.

If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,

Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.

Oh gentlemen, see, see, dead Henry's wounds

55

Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh.

Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity,

For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood

From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells.

Thy deeds inhuman and unnatural

60

Provokes this deluge most unnatural.

Oh God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death.

Oh earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death.

Either heav'n with lightning strike the murd'rer dead,

Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,

65

As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,

Which his hell-governed arm hath butcherèd.

RICHARD Lady, you know no rules of charity,

Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.

Anne continues to curse Richard, accusing him of murder. He asks for an opportunity to defend himself. He denies killing her husband but admits trying to kill Queen Margaret and killing King Henry.

1 Tennis-match language (in pairs)

In lines 68–118, words are returned back and forth rather like the ball in a tennis rally. The technical term for this alternating exchange of lines is *stichomythia* (see page 242).

The exchange uses repetition of words, phrases and rhythms; later they often seize on each other's words and use directly contrasting words in reply. Anne's language of hell and vengeance contrasts with Richard's of heaven and forgiveness, (for example, 'Fairer' contrasts with 'Fouler' in lines 81–3). The repeated patterns of punctuation add to the rhythm of the dialogue.

- a Speak lines 68–118, emphasising the repeated or contrasting words, phrases and rhythms.
- b Discuss whether you find Richard's attitude friendly, aloof or obviously insincere during the exchange.
- c How would you stage the episode?

2 Who's who?

Anne accuses Richard of killing Prince Edward and King Henry VI. Richard denies his guilt, even though in Act 1 Scene 1, line 54 he claimed to have killed Anne's 'husband'. He blames Edward IV, his own brother, for Prince Edward's death. Anne says Queen Margaret was a witness to Richard's murderous actions and accuses Richard of being prevented from killing Margaret herself only by the intervention of his brothers Clarence and Edward. Richard admits to killing King Henry VI, Anne's father-in-law (line 104).

Vouchsafe allow
diffused shapeless
leave permission
circumstance evidence

excuse current genuine excuse
falchion broadsword
bend aim
hedgehog see page 66

ANNE Villain, thou know'st nor law of God nor man. 70
 No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.
 RICHARD But I know none, and therefore am no beast.
 ANNE Oh, wonderful, when devils tell the truth!
 RICHARD More wonderful, when angels are so angry.
 Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman, 75
 Of these supposèd crimes to give me leave
 By circumstance but to acquit myself.
 ANNE Vouchsafe, diffused infection of man,
 Of these known evils but to give me leave
 By circumstance to curse thy cursèd self. 80
 RICHARD Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have
 Some patient leisure to excuse myself.
 ANNE Fouler than heart can think thee, thou canst make
 No excuse current but to hang thyself.
 RICHARD By such despair I should accuse myself. 85
 ANNE And by despairing shalt thou stand excused
 For doing worthy vengeance on thyself,
 That didst unworthy slaughter upon others.
 RICHARD Say that I slew them not.
 ANNE Then say they were not slain. 90
 But dead they are, and, devilish slave, by thee.
 RICHARD I did not kill your husband.
 ANNE Why, then he is alive.
 RICHARD Nay, he is dead, and slain by Edward's hands.
 ANNE In thy foul throat thou liest. Queen Margaret saw 95
 Thy murd'rous falchion smoking in his blood,
 The which thou once didst bend against her breast,
 But that thy brothers beat aside the point.
 RICHARD I was provokèd by her slanderous tongue,
 That laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders. 100
 ANNE Thou wast provokèd by thy bloody mind,
 That never dream'st on aught but butcheries.
 Didst thou not kill this king?
 RICHARD I grant ye.
 ANNE Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then God grant me too 105
 Thou mayst be damnèd for that wicked deed.
 Oh, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous.

*Anne wishes Richard in hell but he offers himself as her new husband.
He claims her beauty caused him to kill. She curses her beauty and
him, hoping for revenge.*

1 Audacious Richard (in pairs)

Having admitted to a series of crimes against her family, in a single audacious move Richard artfully suggests that Anne should share her bed with him.

Work out how Richard's tactic at line 115 could become an explosive moment of drama on stage.

2 Anne's view (in pairs)

Richard describes their meeting as a 'keen encounter of our wits' – an intellectual game. Is that how Anne sees it? The pace of the exchange could give an audience the clue to her feelings. Take parts as Anne and Richard and speak lines 68–119, first as quickly and unemotionally as possible, and then slowly, with Anne showing grief. Discuss which style of speaking seems more effective, or suggest a version of your own.

3 'A slower method'

Richard, by his own admission at line 121, adopts another tactic in his battle to win Anne over. In an attempt to dictate the pace of the argument, he now blames Anne's beauty for being the cause of his murderous acts. He begins with the question at lines 122–4. Suggest why you think Richard changes the pace and topic of his wooing strategy at this point.

help helped
ill rest betide bad sleep visit
timeless untimely
homicide murderer

rend tear
wrack ruin
bereft robbed

RICHARD The better for the king of heaven that hath him.

ANNE He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

RICHARD Let him thank me, that help to send him thither,
For he was fitter for that place than earth. 110

ANNE And thou unfit for any place but hell.

RICHARD Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

ANNE Some dungeon.

RICHARD Your bedchamber. 115

ANNE Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest.

RICHARD So will it, madam, till I lie with you.

ANNE I hope so.

RICHARD I know so. But gentle Lady Anne,
To leave this keen encounter of our wits
And fall something into a slower method,
Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
As blameful as the executioner? 120

ANNE Thou wast the cause and most accursed effect. 125

RICHARD Your beauty was the cause of that effect:
Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
To undertake the death of all the world,
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

ANNE If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide,
These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks. 130

RICHARD These eyes could not endure that beauty's wrack.
You should not blemish it if I stood by.
As all the world is cheerèd by the sun,
So I by that. It is my day, my life. 135

ANNE Black night o'ersshade thy day, and death thy life.

RICHARD Curse not thyself, fair creature; thou art both.

ANNE I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

RICHARD It is a quarrel most unnatural
To be revenged on him that loveth thee. 140

ANNE It is a quarrel just and reasonable
To be revenged on him that killed my husband.

RICHARD He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband
Did it to help thee to a better husband.

ANNE His better doth not breathe upon the earth. 145

Richard tells Anne that he could love her better than Edward, her former husband. He claims Anne has the power to make him weep when other griefs leave him unmoved. He continues to woo her.

1 'Why Plantagenet'?

Plantagenet was the family name of the kings of England between 1154 and 1485. Both the houses of York and Lancaster who fought against each other in the Wars of the Roses were Plantagenets. This is the second time in the wooing scene that Richard has used his family name, Plantagenet, (the first use is in line 123). Suggest why he uses it again to refer to himself.

2 'Why dost thou spit at me?' (in small groups)

Richard's 'Here' (line 149) seems to be the trigger for Anne's strong reaction. Is it this word alone which so angers Anne, or are there other reasons for her contemptuous response?

Brainstorm and list what the action of spitting at someone means and its meanings in different cultures. How might some of the items on your list help you to advise Anne how to play her line 150?

3 More audacity (in pairs)

Delighting in wordplay, Richard's lines 156–71 turn Anne's image of the eyes of a monster into his own eyes which weep for Anne's beauty but are unable to weep at tragic events: the death of Rutland and of his father.

Rutland (line 162) was Richard's younger brother, murdered by Clifford in 1470; 'thy warlike father' is Anne's father, Warwick.

Take parts and speak lines 150–9 showing how Richard reverses Anne's intended insults ('poison' 'infect' 'dead' 'die' 'kill' and 'eyes') in his audacious attempt to win her affection.

mortal fatal
basilisks monsters that killed
with a look
aspects appearances
bedashed drenched

exhale draw out
sued to asked favours of
smoothing flattering
proposed offered as
sues begs, implores, pleads with

RICHARD He lives that loves thee better than he could.

ANNE Name him.

RICHARD Plantagenet.

ANNE Why, that was he.

RICHARD The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

ANNE Where is he?

RICHARD Here.

She spits at him

Why dost thou spit at me?

ANNE Would it were mortal poison for thy sake. 150

RICHARD Never came poison from so sweet a place.

ANNE Never hung poison on a fouler toad.

Out of my sight. Thou dost infect mine eyes.

RICHARD Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

ANNE Would they were basilisks', to strike thee dead. 155

RICHARD I would they were, that I might die at once,
For now they kill me with a living death.

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,
Shamed their aspects with store of childish drops.

These eyes, which never shed remorseful tear, 160

No, when my father York and Edward wept
To hear the piteous moan that Rutland made
When black-faced Clifford shook his sword at him,

Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,
Told the sad story of my father's death 165

And twenty times made pause to sob and weep,
That all the standers-by had wet their cheeks
Like trees bedashed with rain. In that sad time
My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear.

And what these sorrows could not thence exhale 170

Thy beauty hath, and made them blind with weeping.
I never sued to friend nor enemy.

My tongue could never learn sweet smoothing word.

But now thy beauty is proposed my fee,
My proud heart sues and prompts my tongue to speak. 175

She looks scornfully at him

Teach not thy lip such scorn, for it was made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.

Richard offers Anne the opportunity to stab him. He admits he killed King Henry and Prince Edward. Anne refuses to use the dagger, so Richard offers to kill himself. He places his ring on Anne's finger.



‘Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger.’ Richard attempts to win the hand of Anne in marriage as part of his plan to gain the English throne. Do you think Anne is fooled completely by Richard?

dissembler hypocrite
àccessary guilty party, accomplice
figured represented

Vouchsafe accept
Look how just as
encompasseth encircles, rings